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March 16, 2004

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.
Director and Chief Medical Officer

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Thomas L. Garthwaite", is placed over the printed name and title of the sender.

SUBJECT: GRADE POSTING SYSTEM FOR HEALTH FACILITIES

On July 30, 2003, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion instructing the Department of Health Services (DHS), in consultation with County Counsel, to evaluate the fiscal and legal implications of establishing a grading system for community clinics, nursing homes and other health facilities, similar to that used by the County for grading restaurants. This is an update to my reports of September 15 and December 9, 2003. Links to inspection information are now available on Department web sites. Information on nursing homes and hospitals is now available at ladhs.org and lapublichealth.org.

The Department investigated the possibility of making inspection results of community clinics available on line, however, there appear to be significant obstacles to this plan. DHS' Health Facilities Division does not have an electronic database containing the results of community clinic inspections. With an electronic database, it might be possible to generate summary reports, like the ones found on the nursing home and hospital sites maintained by the state and federal governments. The only alternative for HFD would be to manually extrapolate summaries, an extremely time and labor-intensive activity. The public may request and is entitled to see inspection reports, and DHS will look for opportunities to let the public know that this information can be obtained.

If you have any questions or need more information, please let me know.

TLG:bp
307:016

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors